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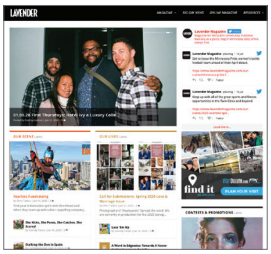

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ON THE COVER

Tori Fixx has made a name for himself as a pioneering force in the world of GLBT hip-hop. Cover photo by Mike Hnida

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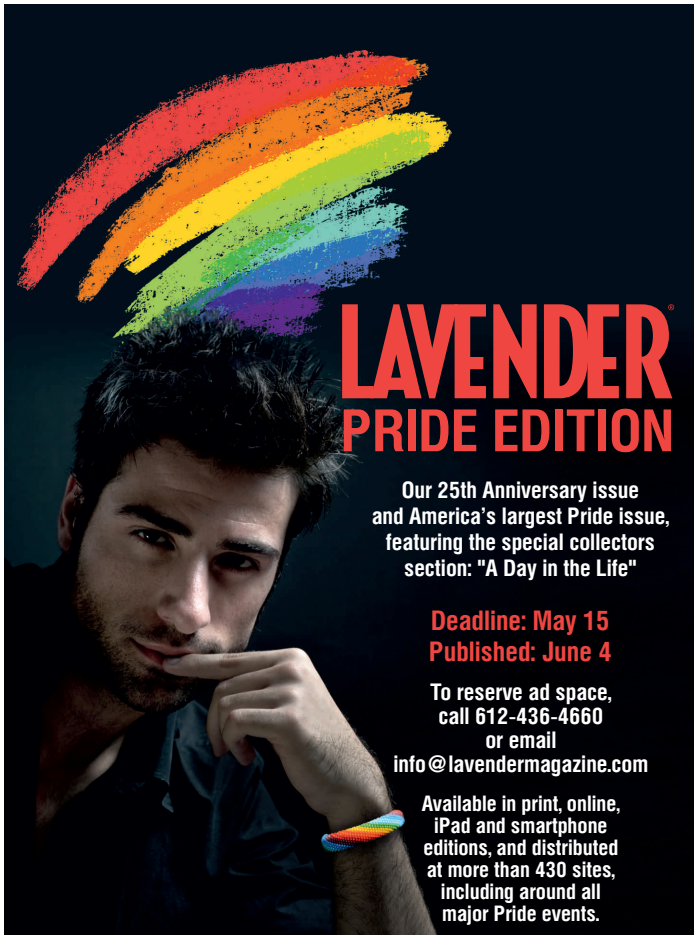

Spectacle Shoppe

Elijah McGregor Fortson refers to himself as a Gay Capricorn of Color (GCC), a prolific dancer, a discourse addict, a hot-take connoisseur, a fount of comic book and anime trivia, a social justice warrior and a man trying to figure out what to do with an Ivy league degree in Media Studies.
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FROM THE EDITOR | BY CHRIS TARBOX

Staged To Perfection

I'm a sucker for show business. All my life, I have had an everlasting love for the glamour and craft of film, television, and stage, so whether it's going to see a new movie in the theater, seeing a Broadway show in person, or watching the endearingly shameless back-patting of award shows (I'm still processing the amazing *Parasite* winning Best Picture at the Oscars, go see it!), I'm eternally fond of the arts and all that they provide for us.

Here in the Twin Cities, our arts community is more vibrant and robust than ever, and we're lucky to have such a large pool of fantastic shows, artists, and musicians to experience here. Now that spring is around the corner, it's a perfect time to see what's in store for us with the 2020 Spring Arts & Dining issue!

Our friends Brett Burger and Bradley Traynor offer up a terrific dinner-and-a-show guide for this season's theatrical offerings in our Spring Arts & Dining Pairings feature. Meanwhile, yours truly interviews GLBT hip-hop pioneer Tori Fixx, and Brett catches up with Ross Mathews himself ahead of his *Name Drop* tour stop at the Varsity Theater. We also profile the badass athletes of Minnesota Roller Derby and their dedication to GLBT inclusion.

We also take a trip to lovely Germany with Carla Waldemar, and Randy Stern gives us not one, but two great new Our Rides columns.

It's a great time to be an arts lover! Bust out your finest threads, make those theater and restaurant reservations, and get ready for the night of your life! ▮

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A WORD IN EDGEWISE | BY E.B. BOATNER

"Only Connect"... At Your Own Risk

Watching the lush PBS production of E.M. Forster's 1910 *Howard's End*, I recalled how the author's epigram, "Only connect," had resonated when I read the novel fifty years later; I was struck by the insight that by connecting disparate concepts, one might gain a better understanding of human behavior.

In seventh grade, Ray Bradbury's stories opened up the realms of fantasy and science fiction, and even before Forster, made me begin to connect, to realize that so-called escapist writing was inevitably rooted in reality. I learned that through Bradbury's "Way in the Middle of the Air" in *The Martian Chronicles* (1950). Here, bigoted small-town southerners watch, stunned and outraged, as floods of blacks (not their word) walked out of town and into rockets that would fly them to Mars. I had Mississippi relatives, and realized the story was about more than space fantasy. As I read this tale in 1953, Emmett Till—we were the same age—was still alive, Rosa Parks had not yet refused to relinquish her seat on the bus, and Sputnik I had not shot into history.

Robert Heinlein's *Revolt* in 2100 read in 1953, would have been diverting, thrilling. Today, too many connections have become attached to Heinlein's "Postscript." "As for the …notion that we could lose our freedom by succumbing to a wave of religious hysteria, I am sorry to say that I consider it possible. I hope that it is not probable. But there is a latent deep strain of religious fanaticism in this, our culture; it is rooted in our history and it has broken out many times in the past. It is with us now; there has been a sharp rise in strongly evangelical sects in this country in recent years some of which hold beliefs theocratic in the extreme…"

Non-fiction? I immersed myself in Leo Damroch's 2019 *The Club: Johnson, Boswell, and the Friends Who Shaped an Age*. Founded in 1764 by Sam Johnson and portraitist Joshua Reynolds, Club members included actor/director David Garrick, playwrights Goldsmith and Sheridan, Johnson biographer Boswell, orator Edmund Burke, historian Edward Gibbon. These men enjoyed competitive repartee, good food and drink. Many like Adam Smith were actively connecting, their work sending roots from the 18th century into our own times. Smith penned *Wealth of Nations* and essentially invented the discipline of economics and the concept of division of labor.

In a lecture on jurisprudence at the University of Glasgow (1762-63) he asserted, "Laws and governments may be considered as a combination of the rich to oppress the poor, and preserve to themselves the inequity of the goods which would otherwise soon be destroyed by the attacks of the poor, who if not hindered by the government would soon reduce the others to an equality with themselves by open violence." ∎

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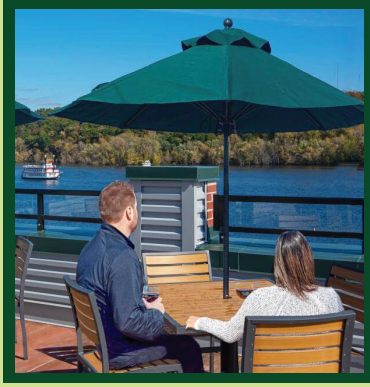
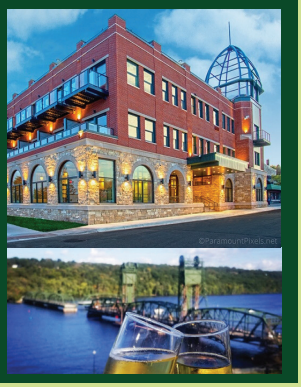

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BIZ BUZZ

THE ELECTRIC FETUS

Business: The Electric Fetus

Your Name: Aaron Meyerring and Stephanie Covart Meyerring

Job Title: 2nd Generation owners

Give us a brief overview of your business and what services you provide the community: We are an independent music and gift store in business since 1968, with locations in Minneapolis and Duluth, Minnesota. We are best known for our funky environment, vast array of music selection, used product, vinyl, hard-to-find titles, in-store performances and events and unique clothing and gift boutique.

How many years have you been in business? We have been in business for 51 years. We'll turn 52 in June!

What's something unique we should know about your business? Something unique about The Electric Fetus is that we appeal to multi-generations. A child can come in with their parent and grandparent, and each person will find something of interest in the gift and music departments. We have something for everyone!

What's your favorite thing about your job? Working with our spouse (wink wink, we have to say that right?) But in all honesty, the best parts about our job are being surrounded by music everyday, being able to bring our community together in a positive way, seeing our customers being excited about being at the store(s) or what they bought is so fulfilling. Another favorite thing for us would be the dedication of our employees. Everyone's roles at the store(s) are so vital to who we are, and have helped shape who we are over the years.

What's the best thing about working with the GLBT community? We take pride in working with many groups in our community, and we appreciate the loyalty of the GLBT community. We offer many things—from local music and artisans to international artists—that are of interest to GLBT patrons of live music and other performing arts.

Does your business have anything new, fun or unique happening on the horizon? Yes! Record Store Day is nearing for us! It is typically the 3rd Saturday in April and is a global day to celebrate independent record stores. This year it is on Saturday, April 18, 2020. It is an event-filled exciting day full of exclusive products, live performances, food trucks, vinyl craft area for all ages and so much more! If you've never been, you need to check it out!

We also have our Anniversary Sale coming up in June—we turn 52. And always check in with us in our stores or online: we host numerous events and performances throughout the year! There is always something fun on the horizon.

If you weren't doing your current job, what would you be doing? It's hard to imagine The Fetus not being in our lives, but if we did do something else:

Aaron: I would love to try my hand at competition BBQ.

Stephanie: Interior Design. It is what I went to school for and actually where I started my career before The Fetus.

Photo by Gray Duck Studios— Lisa Quinlan

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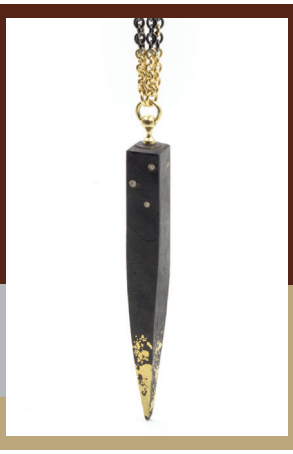
home
chocolate



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THE NOIRE PAGEANT FUNDRAISER

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LUSH
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Prepare for a night of world-class burlesque and drag entertainment with the "Minneapolis Edition" of The Noire Pageant Fundraiser at LUSH! This pageant is dedicated to shining a spotlight on performers of color on an international level, and the money raised helps increase representation and close equity gaps for PoC artists. Headliners for this event are Crocodile Lightning, Nox Falls, and Ms. B LaRose, with performances by Dahlia Dulce, Tre' Da Marc, Elektra Cute, Kitson Sass, Keke Boudreaux, Musette Badeau, Del the Funky Homosexual, and Joy Coy. Hosted by Butch Charming, this event kicks off at 7 p.m.

RED HOT RASCALS

Feb. 29
The Black Hart
1415 University Ave. W, St. Paul
$6
www.blackhartstp.com

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DEUCES UP!

March 7
Uptown VFW
2916 Lyndale Ave. S, Minneapolis
$6
uptownvfw.ticketfly.com

Need an excuse to break a serious sweat on your Saturday night out on the town? Get yourself down to the Uptown VFW's dance floor for DJ Keezy and Shannon Blowtorch's monthly residency. You're guaranteed one hell of a great night getting down to tunes curated by these badass disc jockeys. Starts at 10 p.m.

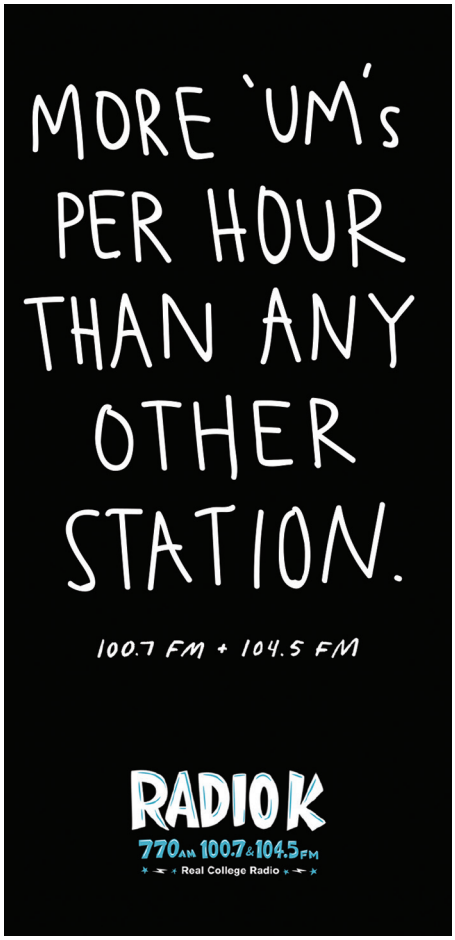
ROSES IN BLOOM

March 8
The Pourhouse Downtown
10 S. 5th St. #11, Minneapolis

Photo courtesy of BigStock/Solarseven

$8.55-17.09
thepourhousempls.com

Celebrate the graduating class of the Rose Academy of Burlesque in person at The Pourhouse! Watch as the graduating students perform specially prepared routines in this incredible showcase event. Hosted by Butch Charming, this event will feature appearances by New York's Sydni Deveroux, and Seattle's Nox Falls. The show kicks off at 6 p.m. ∎



TRAVEL | BY CARLA WALDEMAR | PHOTOS BY CARLA WALDEMAR

Germany, Present & Past

I'm happy (okay: thrilled) to be back in Germany, eager to tread the cobblestones of cities rich with history, churches ablaze with precious art, and cafes piled with beer and sausages: the Germany of my dreams.

But this time, as my plane lands in Frankfurt, I'm not heading straight for the train station to whisk me straight away to those winsome destinations, without first exploring what this high-energy city has to offer. Skyscrapers punching the clouds line the city's River Main (thus the nickname Main-hattan). With Brexit looming, it's rumored to become next London, epicenter of all that matters.

That pretty riverbank is lined with one fascinating museum after another, starting with the Stadl, home to bold-name painters from Rembrandt to Fra Angelico, Renoir to Andy Warhol. The smorgasbord continues with museums celebrating communications, architecture, film, Orthodox icons, and more.

Behind those treasuries lies Sachsenhausen—Main-hattan's Brooklyn—home to cozy dens serving its famous apple wine (and brats and dumplings) and indie shopping lures. Then climb the bridge to transport you to Old Town (yes, Frankfurt is not all bank towers) and its storybook centerpiece, Romer Square. Applaud wedding parties emerging from City Hall, then trace your way to the nearby Historisches Museum, detailing Frankfurt's history, told via 100 objects (typewriter to Nazi gas canister). Explore the lacy spires of St. Bartholomew Cathedral via a newly-minted street recreating pre-bombing artisans' shops, or the futuristic Saalgasse, housing Seuss-like architectural fantasies.

Circling those skyscrapers, you'll discover a green ring of parkland blooming where Napoleon destroyed the former city wall. Within it lie icons like the house of homeboy poet Goethe, the effervescent city market, and scads of pedestrian shopping streets, from classy Goethestrasse (Dior, Chanel) to everyman's Zeil, lively with the likes of Zara.

I surveyed the scene from my room high atop Hotel Jumeirah, owned by the sheik of Dubai, who doesn't pinch pennies to please guests (think: full-service spa—sauna to massage—whose elite products also resided in my bathroom, bigger than my hometown condo). German artworks shine throughout, along with goodies made from the rooftop's honeybees.

And fueling Restaurant Max, where breakfasts boast hearty German favorites plus Middle Eastern fare. Evenings, it's transformed into an elegant retreat, where I relished a creamy chestnut soup mined with smoked duck breast, then more duck, roasted with apple, cabbage and potato dumplings, served with apple-date chutney and lingonberry sauce. Yes, I saved room for dessert, because it celebrated chocolate.

Frankfurt's River Main inspired the city's nickname of Main-hattan.

An early-morning train trundled me to Leipzig, called "the music city." Music came before the Soviets, who ruled this East Germany town after World War II—and we'll get to that fascinating bit of history in a minute. First, back to Bach.

Admirers' flowers spill over his gravestone, inside St. Thomas Church, where visitors often may catch a concert. Bach's statue surveys the scene out front, and across the street beckons the Bach Museum, which relates the story of how he became cantor of this very church in 1723 (not to the entire satisfaction of the building's elders, whose first two choices turned down the job).

It was his task to train the boys' choir and oversee their dorms; to publish and sell books; and, by the way, to compose a new cantata for virtually every Sunday service. The museum boasts the organ he played; music in the master's handwriting; and his many portraits.

Then head to Mendelssohn Haus, where composer Felix lived, composed, and incidentally, painted the lovely water colors on display, while serving as the famed Gewandhaus Concert Hall's conductor. Visitors can direct an electronic 'orchestra' onsite, choosing variables such as tempo, volume and even venue. (Note to self: My performance on the podium indicates it's wise to keep the day job.)

That famed Gewandhaus anchors a vast plaza turned by the Soviet GDR (German Democratic Republic) into a cityscape of dismal architecture. The site's beloved University Church? The Soviets dynamited it on a dark night in 1968. It's recently been reconstructed—slightly off-center as visual testimony to the tragedy.

St. Nicholas Church remains undamaged, however. During the bleak GDR years, citizens gathered here each Monday in peaceful protest. Then, on a fateful day in 1989, they marched for freedom—70,000 brave folks, with Soviet guns trained on them. It was the beginning of the end: Word spread fast throughout East Germany, and the Berlin Wall tumbled down. Credit Leipzig!

Today the story of those GDR years is remembered in the Forum of Contemporary History, detailing everything from rigged elections and censorship imposed by the Stasi (secret police), to their secret prisons, and what locals called "Socialist queues" while lining up to (maybe) gain a rare pound of coffee.

The MdbK—the city's art museum—showcases treasures from Cranach's divine "Adam and Eve" on through Leipzig's Impressionists, then Max Beckmann and other painters the Nazis deemed "degenerate."

Dine—you must!—in yesteryear's Auerbach Keller, where servers in red vests deliver impossible portions of homey classics, from potato soup to pork knuckle and sauerbraten, just as in centuries past to patrons like Martin Luther and Goethe, whose statue testifies his satisfaction. Or whisk yourself to the top floor of the skyscraping Panorama Tower for a vista with modern eats like pork fillet with kale and polenta or fish aside risotto.

Leipzig, as does most of Germany, boasts a lively GLBT scene. In fact, it hosts Germany's biggest gay sauna, Stargayte, which includes a cinema and bar, open from Friday straight through to Monday. Or opt for the colorful party series "No, No, No!" melding a children's birthday party vibe with a big-city gay scene. Queer night at "KissKissBangBang" is held at Club Twenty One every second Friday.

The next morning's train delivers me to Nurn-

A statue of Johann Sebastian Bach oversees the square outside the Church of St. Thomas in Leipzig, Germany.

berg, luring travellers since 1050—renowned for events both festive and somber. It's where Wagner's opera "Die Meistersinger" is set, and also served as center of Hitler's Nazi empire and the ensuing post-war trials. But its Christmas Market, one of Germany's biggest, is a far happier tradition, with close to 200 stalls overseen—not by Santa, but by a pretty angel, the city's symbol and bringer of children's gifts.The rest of the year, a bounteous food market fills the square, punctuated by the Beautiful Fountain—a shimmering spire to touch for good luck. It's the frontispiece for Frauenkirche Church, where, at noon, tiny figurines of burghers paying homage to the emperor parade under the clock. Nearby 13th-century St. Sebald's houses an ornate silver shrine under glowing stained glass windows, while also-13th-century St. Laurence hosts an illustrious carving of the Annunciation.

Precious artworks like these were hidden in bunkers beneath the town's hilltop castle (open to visit) during the war years. Today the German National Museum is home once more to these priceless treasures, including paintings by homeboy Albrecht Durer (whose house tourists can visit), along with those of Cranach, Rembrandt and more. Don't overlook the smartly modern Neues Museum beside it, with an exhibit devoted to products designed in both East and West Germany of the Fifties: typewriters, sewing machines, kitchenware. Plus a giant sculpted gorilla. And another sculpture of toilet paper rolls.

The Toy Museum offers a secret indulgence for grown-ups, for Nurnberg was famed for its toy production. On display: battalions of toy soldiers, miniature railroads, dolls almost as old as the town itself, plenty of teddy bears.

Bordering the train station, a Crafts Village showcases artisans at work as well as a coffeehouse and bratwurst ops. Yes, I indulged. But I saved room for dinner at Steichele, serving hearty German specialties since 1892 and a proud promoter of the Slow Food Movement. Glistening goose for me, though it famous carp was sorely tempting.

Another train ride whisked me to Wiesbaden, a genteel spa town hugging the Rhine River. It's pleasantly "undiscovered" by most American tourists, but the town's Roman founders knew a good thing when it bubbled from the ground. The city boasts dozens of thermal springs fizzing up from fountains, including those of Kaiser Friedrich Thermal Bath, an Art Nouveau wonder which welcomes visitors.

First, a breakfast stop at Café Maldaner of 1850, whose owner cries "Wilkommen!" to all who pass through the door. Pause to admire the pastry case's lineup of fancy cakes that augment its coffee menu. "It's the first Viennese coffeehouse outside of Vienna," a guest explained as career waitresses in crisp white caps delivered a breakfast mélange of ham, cold cuts, cheese, pickles, tomatoes, sweet breads and eggs.

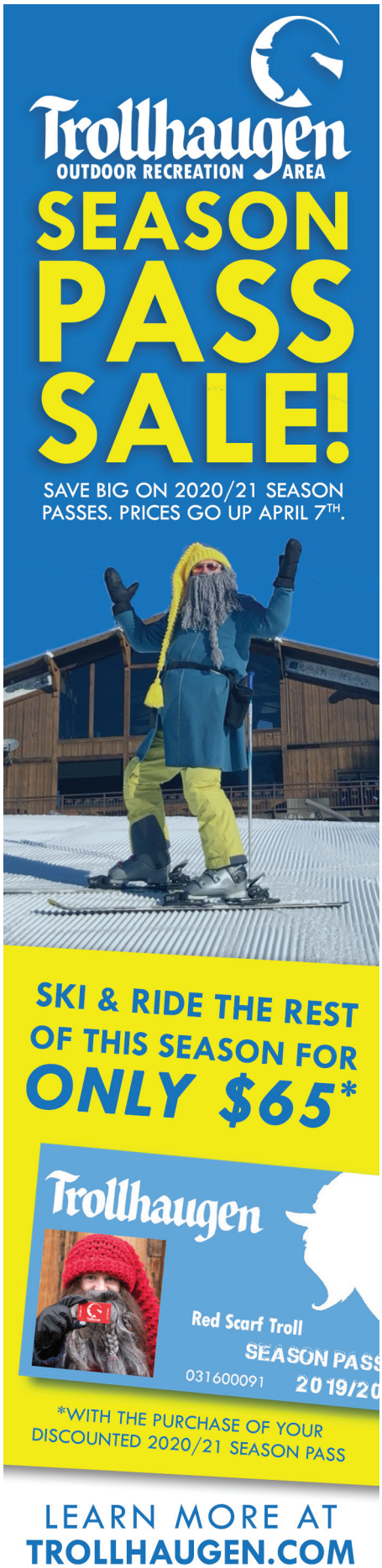
Well fed (in Germany, that's simply table stakes), I headed off to peer at the remains of Roman walls and statuary amide the pedestrian-only shopping streets and red-brick churches, on my way to the city's museum—half natural history and half art. And what art! Art as in Art Nouveau: graceful, curvy furniture, sinuous lamps and chandeliers, and paintings of wistful maidens. But time didn't halt a hundred years ago. The museum also boasts an exciting showcase of bold, modern German paintings.

Near it glows the Kurhaus of 1907—the city's landmark and center of its social life. Its elite casino—all polished wood and chandeliers—adjoins a theater and a cozy restaurant, where I enjoyed a wintertime feast of roast goose, potato dumplings, baked apple, chestnuts and red cabbage.

Wiesbaden's food scene continues at the summit of Neroburg, a forested hilltop overlooking the city, where a Russian Orthodox chapel bearing five golden onion domes guards a host of precious icons. Along the path lies Wagner in Opelbad, a restaurant since 1869, with unmatched view and menu: creamy chestnut soup, pate and chocolate mousse for me, salmon for my companion. And champagne.

Sekt, rather, as it's named in Germany—sourced from the nearby cellars of Henkells, open to tour and taste. Then on to Kunder, producer of fancy chocolates since 1889 and said to serve the best hot chocolate in town. Among its tasty wares, choose Teufel ("devil") chocolates encasing pear liqueur or Venus, harboring chili inside.

So, blame it on Venus, or the Devil: I'm hooked. I'm already planning a return visit. To chart your own, see www.germany.travel. ∎



INTERSTATE
Mixed Blood Theatre
at Mixed Blood Theatre
March 6-29
www.mixedblood.com

Everyone goes through a journey in their lifetime, however *Interstate* tells the story of two trans people who are at two very different stages of their journey. This pop-rock musical shows the differences of Dash, a transgender performer embarking on a cross-country tour, and Henry, a transgender teenager who is still struggling with his identity and family.

Interstate. Photo by Rich Ryan

ARTS SECTION BY: BRETT BURGER

DINING SECTION BY: BRADLEY TRAYNOR

PRODUCED BY: LINDA RAINES & CHRIS TARBOX

2020 *Spring* ARTS & DINING PAIRINGS

SKELETON CREW
Yellow Tree Theatre
Through March 1
www.yellowtreetheatre.com

It's been more than a decade since the Great Recession, and yet many of us still feel its effects today. *Skeleton Crew* goes back to the beginning of this tragic time in American history and how the closing of the last auto stamping plant in Detroit affects four very different people.

THE WHITE CARD: HERE'S LOOKING AT YOU
Penumbra Theatre Company
at Penumbra Theatre
Through March 1
www.penumbratheatre.org

A wealthy white couple, who collect contemporary art conveying racial injustice, invite over a rising black photographer by the name of Charlotte. Expectations shift drastically from the first toast, and conversations on the current political climate influence the rest of the evening.

DOG LOGIC
Theatre in the Round Players
at Theatre in the Round
Through March 8
www.theatreintheround.org

An ex-hippie by the name of Hertel Daggett is committed to a life of solitude by living in a junk pile of an abandoned pet cemetery. His life is threatened when a real estate mogul plots to build a shopping mall on his cemetery.

TWELFTH NIGHT
Guthrie Theater
at Wurtele Thrust Stage
Through March 22
www.guthrietheater.org

Considered as a model Shakespearean comedy, *Twelfth Night* follows Viola, who must disguise herself as a boy after washing up on the shores of Illyria. After a series of misunderstandings, miscommunication and mistaken identities, love triangles form and entangle until the truth is revealed.

SPAMTOWN, USA
Children's Theatre Company
Through April 5
www.childrenstheatre.org

Taking place in Austin, Minnesota during the Hormel strike, *Spamtown, USA* follows five kids and their various dreams including space camp, out-of-state college and more. This Children's Theatre Company production tells a story of strength, perseverance and friendship in the face of adversity.

PAIRING: BLACK SHEEP PIZZA
There's a wonderfully delicious family friendly pizza place just down the street from the Children's Theatre worthy of any pre-show nosh. In addition to a heaping helping of hand-crafted, coal-fired pizzas, Black Sheep's ample apps are equally drool-worthy. Do yourself a favor and order the meatballs. As well as a couple pizzas. Obviously.

THE DIXIE SWIM CLUB
Old Log Theater
Through May 29
www.oldlog.com

Every August, five southern women who met in college get together for a long weekend to reconnect. Spanning thirty-three years, *The Dixie Swim Club* focuses on four of those weekends and how even if they see each other once a year, their friendship can survive anything.

PAIRING: CAST & CRU (AT OLD LOG)
Not quite dinner theater, but dinner and theater in the same place sounds just as nice, no? The Old Log Theater is a wonderfully warm and inviting venue with a talented chef-driven dining spot built-in right onsite. Grab your special someone for a beautiful drive out to Lake Minnetonka, enjoy an amazing meal, then settle in for a night of great local theater.

Skeleton Crew. Photo by Justin Cox

THE MUSIC MAN

Chanhassen Dinner Theatres
Through Sept. 5
www.chanhassendt.com

Before *The Music Man* opens on Broadway this fall, Harold Hill, a fast-talking salesman, will con his way onto the Chanhassen stage. Despite not knowing anything about music, Hill plans to skip town with the cash he raises from a fundraiser until he falls for Marian, the librarian.

PAIRING: CHANHASSEN DINNER THEATRE

Always the easiest pairing on the list for obvious reasons, Chanhassen Dinner Theatre takes dinner and a show to a whole new level. Literally. Every time I sit down to enjoy a meal at this classic Twin Cities theater venue, I'm immediately reminded how the food matches the magic happening on stage. Don't miss the Chicken Chanhassen.

THE BACCHAE

Guthrie Theater
at McGuire Proscenium Stage
Feb. 29-April 5
www.guthrietheater.org

One of Euripides' lesser known Greek tragedies, The *Bacchae*, is a tale of betrayal, tyranny and family. In an attempt to prove his true father is Zeus, Dionysus tries to change citizens' loyalties away from King Pentheus' clutches. Meanwhile, the king's leadership is threatened by the god's himself in this modern telling directed by the legendary Anne Bogart.

MY FAIR LADY

Hennepin Theatre Trust
at Orpheum Theatre
March 3-8
www.hennepintheatretrust.org

After a successful run at the Lincoln Center Theater, *My Fair Lady* comes to Minneapolis. This American musical and beloved tale features Prof. Henry Higgins, who is confident in his skills that he can turn a working-class girl into a high functioning member of the upper class. Eliza Doolittle agrees to speech lessons from him, in turn hoping to boost her chances of getting a job.

PAIRING: 4 BELLS

A "sumptuous new production" not only describes *My Fair Lady*, but my favorite Loring Park restaurant, as well. 4 Bells is a feast for the eyes and appetites. Chef Scott Pampuch is doing wonderfully delicious things on the edge of downtown Minneapolis. From fresh seafood to their signature fried Chicken, you'll be hard-pressed to pick a better spot.

FACE TO FACE: OUR HMONG COMMUNITY

Park Square Theatre
at Andy Boss Thrust Stage, Park Square Theatre
March 5-15
www.parksquaretheatre.org

Face To Face: Our Hmong Community uses interview-based theatre to tell the story of Hmong families right here in St. Paul. In their own words, the storytellers of this show are people we know, our neighbors, friends and even family to talk about their struggles, resilience and successes.

THE RAINBOW FISH

Children's Theatre Company
March 10-April 5
www.childrenstheatre.org

Rainbow Fish, a story so many remember from their childhood, comes to life in this stage adaptation that uses puppetry, scenic effects and original music. *Rainbow Fish* discovers new worlds, friends and lessons as they learn a valuable lesson in sharing their most prized possession.

REDWOOD

The Jungle Theater
March 11-April 12
www.jungletheater.com

An interracial couple gets put in an uncomfortable position when Meg's uncle finds that her boyfriend's relatives used to be owned by her ancestors. Can their relationship and love overcome the historical power structures and racial barriers they now face?

LA BOHEME

Theater Latté Da
at The Ritz Theater
March 11-April 26
www.latteda.org

Serving as the inspiration behind the blockbuster musical Rent, *La Boheme* is a tale of young artists who live in Paris. One of the most frequently performed operas worldwide, this story brings audiences through a time of joy, sadness when we lose someone we love, and all through a celebration of art.

PAIRING: YOUNG JONI

There are plenty of great eats within walking distance to The Ritz, but if pizza and ambience are on the menu, head directly to Young Joni. James Beard Award-winning Chef Ann Kim does the same creative magic to pizza what Latté Da does to theater. Craft cocktails, wood-fired pizzas and equally sumptuous surroundings make for the perfect pre- or post-show nibble.

CENTERPLAY
Guthrie Theater
at Dowling Studio, Guthrie Theater
March 20-28
www.guthrietheater.org
A theatrical production combining vocals, live instrumentation, movement and spoken word, artist Vie Boheme develops an immersive show for the ages. Boheme takes center stage and connects with audience members on stereotypes that women of color face through her unique performance style.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS
Theatre In the Round Players
at Theatre in the Round
March 20-April 12
www.theatreintheround.org
Inspired by the famous tale by Charles Dickens, this stage adaptation shows the transformation that Pip goes from being on the streets to a man of character. As he goes out on this quest through his life, Pip meets bizarre and mysterious people on his journey to become a gentleman.

EDWARD TULANE
Minnesota Opera
at Ordway Center for the Performing Arts
March 21-29
www.ordway.org
Edward Tulane is a toy rabbit who thinks fairly high of himself, and while his life seems easy, it gets flipped upside down when he loses his family. Whether you're new to opera or not, this show promises a whimsical time for the young and young at heart.

GIRL SHORTS
Theatre Unbound
at Gremlin Theatre, St. Paul
March 21-April 4
www.theatreunbound.com
A celebration of female artists, *Girl Shorts* is a festival style production that highlights the voices of the Twin Cities. Theatre Unbound gives a platform for women of variety and diversity to perform three one-hour sets of multiple shorts across an immense range of talent.

NOT FOR SALE
History Theatre
at History Theatre
March 21-April 12
www.historytheatre.com
After building a successful real estate empire in the Twin Cities, Arnold Weigel puts everything on the line in the early '60s. Weigel begins working with families of color as they begin to purchase homes in predominantly all-white neighborhoods.

Come From Away. Photo by Matthew Murphy

ANASTASIA
Hennepin Theatre Trust
at Orpheum Theatre
March 24-April 5
www.hennepintheatretrust.org
Anastasia is a story rooted in history as a young woman sets out to uncover the truth of her past. As she travels across the Russian Empire to Paris to reconnect with her long lost family, a ruthless Soviet officer is determined to stop her. With songs like "Once Upon a December" and "Journey to the Past," audience members will go on a daring and adventurous romantic comedy.

NOT IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD
History Theatre
at History Theatre
March 25-April 5
www.historytheatre.com
The shameful history of housing segregation in St. Paul is something that still haunts our capital today. *Not in Our Neighborhood* follows two civil rights advocates, William and Nellie Francis, as they hope to move to their dream home in an all-white neighborhood. However, their neighbors are not as welcoming as they'd hope as they terrorize them into leaving.

PAIRING: STEWART'S
When it comes to the best burger in the Twin Cities, you'll often hear people tout the one at Parlour in Minneapolis. For my money, I'm heading to Stewart's. Their burger is a thing of beauty. Rich, crispy, juicy, cheese-laden beauty. This delightful little restaurant is tucked away just across the river in St. Paul near the University of St. Thomas.

THE COLOR PURPLE
Ordway
at Ordway Center for the Performing Arts
March 31-April 5
www.ordway.org
Winner of the 2016 Tony Award for Best Musical Revival, this incredible classic documents the life of Celie, a young African American teenager who grows up in Georgia through 1900-1940. Her struggles and eventual triumph cover themes of civil rights, sexuality, and family.

PAIRING: SAKURA
Just a few blocks away from the Ordway is one of the best Japanese restaurants in the Twin Cities. Fun fact, it's also one rich with history. And delicious food. Whether you're in the mood for a light flight of sushi favorites or a heaping helping of traditional Japanese comfort food, Sakura always sates.

STING STARRING IN THE LAST SHIP
Ordway
at Ordway Center for the Performing Arts
April 8-19
www.ordway.org
After a run on Broadway, rock icon Sting himself is setting sail in the touring production of *The Last Ship*. When a sailor returns home, after being out at sea for seventeen years, his past and future collide in his town. With the local shipyard's future always in jeopardy, the foreman and his wife struggle to keep the town under control.

SHERWOOD: THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD
Yellow Tree Theatre
April 10-May 10
www.yellowtreetheatre.com
In this new reimagined story of Robin Hood, this comedy takes familiar characters including Little John and Friar Tuck, and flips the story on its edge as Maid Marian is no longer the one in trouble. Her skills as a diplomat and archer help Robin Hood and his merry men—and women—on a new adventure in this new Minnesota premiere.

EMMA
Guthrie Theater
at Wurtele Thrust Stage
April 11-May 31
www.guthrietheater.org
Fans of Jane Austen will have plenty to cheer about with this production of *Emma* at the Guthrie this spring. Emma is a matchmaker of great success, and when her plans fall through for a couple, she begins to think that true love may have been directly in front of her the entire time.

Summer—The Donna Summer Musical. Photo by Matthew Murphy

FARRELL'S EXTREME BODYSHAPING

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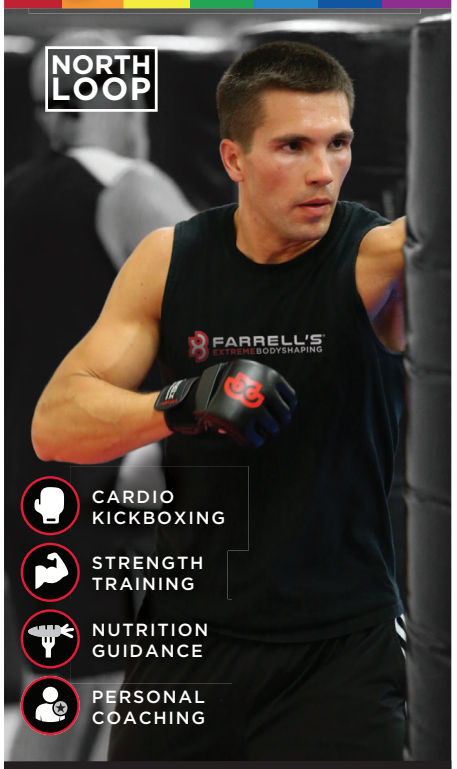

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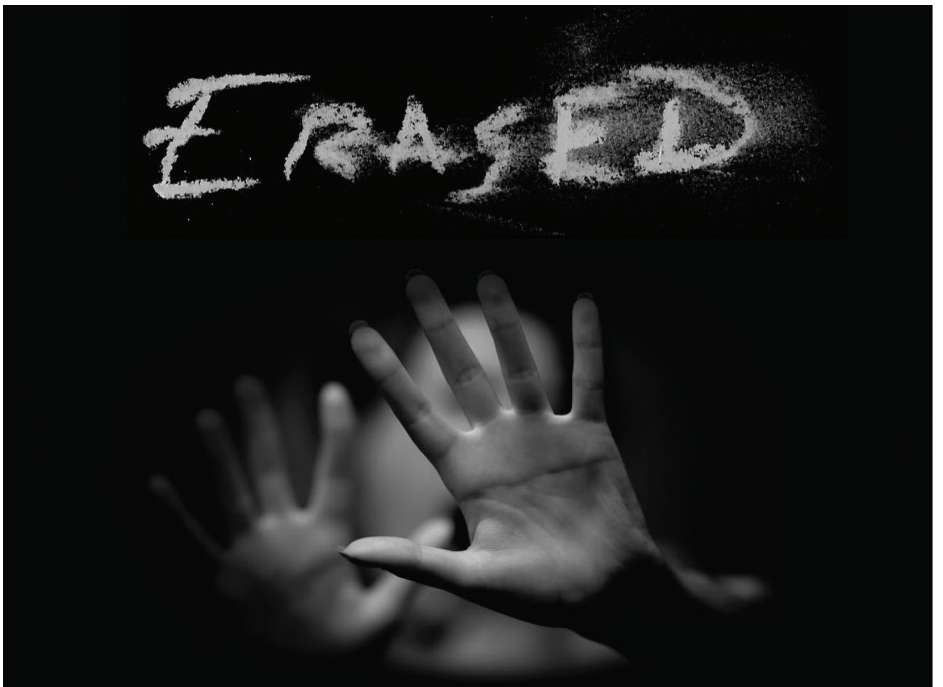

STIGMATA

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Featuring new commissions by Jake Runestad and Tim Takach, our spring concert *Erased* will address the communities and environments that are in danger of being erased: from indigenous peoples and trans youth, to natural habitats – as well as our very own lives. The first half of our concert will also feature the local premiere of "Listen," a compelling work for our Chamber Singers ensemble.

The second half of our concert will address one thing we wish could be erased: the stigma against those who live with HIV. We will premiere a new song cycle called *Stigmata* that addresses through song the effects of this stigma on the lives of people living with HIV every day. The metaphor of the stigmata serves to remind people that we don't need to inflict the horrible pains of social crucifixion upon the HIV+ community.

Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus

SEASON 39

tcgmc.org

MARIE AND ROSETTA
Park Square Theatre
at Proscenium Stage
April 15-May 24
www.parksquaretheatre.org
Guitar playing, gospel music and plenty of foot-tapping music await everyone in the upcoming production of *Marie and Rosetta* at Park Square Theatre. Rosetta and Marie are in the process of preparing for a tour as they rehearse songs like "Sit Down" and " I Want a Tall Skinny Papa."

PAIRING: THE LEXINGTON
A story about two women of classic rock, R&B and gospel deserves a classic prelude. The Lexington tells its own classic tale, having risen from the ashes like a phoenix, serving a new generation of curious diners eager to indulge its storied past. And its mouth-watering menu. Which includes, among other tasty morsels, a 16 oz. pepper crusted ribeye. In the immortal words of Sister Rosetta, "Shout, Sister Shout!"

MAME
Artistry at Bloomington Theatre and Art Center
at Schneider Theater
April 17-May 10
www.artistrymn.org
A well known story, originally starring Angela Lansbury and Bea Arthur, Mame Dennis is a bewildering socialite whose life comes to a sudden halt when her orphaned nephew comes to live with her. This show features strong themes of family, remaining true to yourself and is the first Twin Cities production in more than a decade.

PAIRING: LYN65
It's not quite Bloomington, but whenever there's a show nearby, I love to direct people to LYN65. Tucked away just south of Highway 62, this little secret garden of a restaurant is perfect for a pre-show dinner date. Especially if you love food. And if you didn't love food, why are you reading this? I suggest small-plating your way across the menu. Don't skip the burger or the fried chicken sandwich either or we're no longer friends.

NINA SIMONE: FOUR WOMEN
Pillsbury House Theatre
at Pillsbury House + Theatre
April 17-May 17
www.pillsburyhouseandtheatre.org
Inspired by the song "Four Women" by Nina Simone, four women are trapped in a church the day of the 1963 bombing in Birmingham, Alabama in an act of white supremacist terrorism. As time begins to run out and riots begin, the women's minds wander as they contemplate the tragedy and if they are to move forward.

PAIRING: BUSTER'S ON 28TH
Two words: Steak sandwich. Trust me. Besides the fact that it's not far from Pillsbury House, Buster's is truly just an all-around great neighborhood hideaway filled with great food. Besides yummy eats, their selection of beers from near and afar is sure to quench the palate of even the haughtiest of hop lovers.

Disney's Frozen. Photo by Deen van Meer

ANNIE
Children's Theatre Company
April 19-June 21
www.childrenstheatre.org
Everyone's favorite little redheaded orphan returns to the Twin Cities at Children's Theatre Company's production of *Annie*. After being picked to spend Christmas with Mr. Warbucks, a multimillionaire, Annie gets a light of hope as she takes on a new adventure that could lead to her eventual adoption.

HOW BLACK MOTHERS SAY I LOVE YOU
Penumbra Theatre Company
at Penumbra Theatre
April 21-May 17
www.penumbratheatre.org
After having her two kids at seventeen and nineteen, Daphne has to make one of the hardest decisions a mother has to make. As she leaves both of her kids in Jamaica, to move stateside to earn money to support them, time passes and six years later, her daughters join her. While they are together again, the hurt and pain of their initial separation still loom.

PRINTS
Theatre In the Round Players
at Theatre in the Round
April 24-May 17
www.theatreintheround.org
A new scientific method of crime-fighting—fingerprints—is used for the first time to help investigate the kidnapping of beer tycoon William Hamm in 1933. As the case heats up, the kidnappers attempt to figure out what they are to do with their hostage.

RED MAYOR
Walking Shadow Theatre Company
at Open Eye Theatre
April 25-May 10
www.walkingshadowcompany.org
After electing America's first Communist major, the small town of Crosby, Minnesota thought they could not fail. A year later, Karl Emil Nygard had failed as this radio drama tells the story of our first Red Mayor.

MARY JANE
The Jungle Theater
April 29-May 31
www.jungletheater.com
This moving play takes place during a wet summer in New York City with a single mother as she attempts to solve the problems she faces while caring for a sick child. *Mary Jane* features one of the Twin Cities' most notable actresses, Sally Wingert, and showcases the lengths that a mother will go for her child.

RANDY RAINBOW LIVE
Hennepin Theatre Trust
at State Theatre
May 1
www.hennepintheatretrust.org
Emmy-nominated comedian, actor, singer, writer and satirist Randy Rainbow returns to the Twin Cities. Best known for his YouTube series, *The Randy Rainbow Show*, Randy performs a series of musical and political parodies which earned him a 2019 Emmy nomination for Outstanding Short Form Variety Series.

DON GIOVANNI
Minnesota Opera
at Ordway Center for the Performing Arts
May 2-16
www.mnopera.org
Written by the world's most famous composer, Mozart's opera about the infamous womanizer Don Giovanni combines dark comedy with social commentary when a man dares to defy hell itself. Can Don Giovanni overcome his betrayals that seem to have caught up to him? Will he have to pay the ultimate price?

RUNESTONE! A MUSICAL
History Theatre
at History Theatre
May 2-24
www.historytheatre.com
When Olof Ohman, a Swedish immigrant, digs up a rock with a story on how Vikings were the first Europeans to land in Minnesota, he's praised for the discovery. But there is no such thing as a historic discovery without a little controversy, as citizens wonder what the real truth behind this runestone is.

DISNEY'S FROZEN
Hennepin Theatre Trust
at Orpheum Theatre
May 6-31
hennepintheatretrust.org
Disney's smash hit *Frozen* will be making a stop in Minneapolis this spring, including the return of our hometown hero Caroline Innerbichler, who is cast as Princess Anna. *Frozen* is the tale of Elsa, who has magical powers and seemingly struggles to control them as she takes the throne to become Queen.

CLASS OF '85
COLLIDE Theatrical Dance Company
at The TEK Box at the Cowles Center
May 7-17
www.collidetheatrical.org
Everyone has a favorite 80's movie, from The Breakfast Club to Pretty in Pink. COLLIDE Theatrical Dance Company takes the secrets behind high school stereotypes and performs with eight dancers, two vocalists and a live band in this high-energy dance production to see who will win Prom King and Queen.

Mame. Photo by Devon Cox

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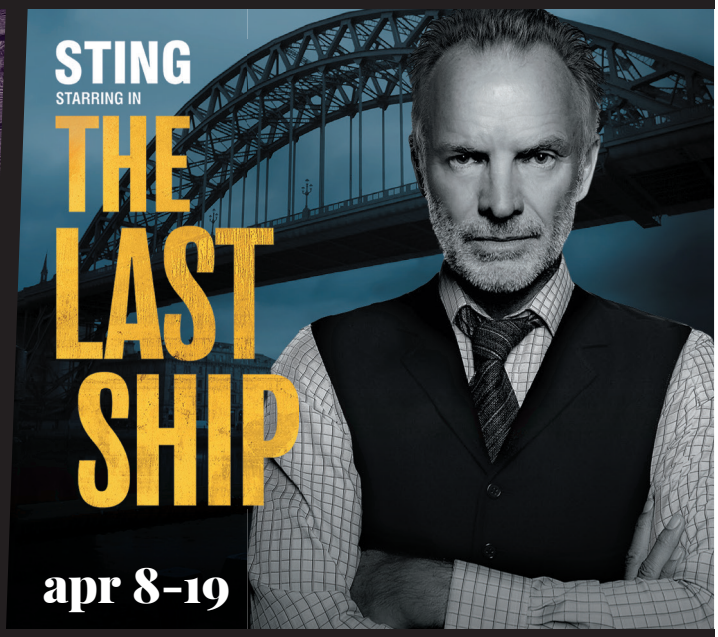

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THE OFFICE! A MUSICAL PARODY

Hennepin Theatre Trust
at Pantages Theatre
May 19-23
www.hennepintheatretrust.org

Everyone's favorite sitcom, *The Office*, follows Scranton's third-largest paper company through a documentary-style narrative. These characters come back to life through this hilarious parody and unauthorized musical of the hit TV show.

TWELVE ANGRY MEN

Theater Latté Da
at The Ritz Theater
May 27-June 28
www.latteda.org

A notable story and well known by many, *Twelve Angry Men* takes place in a tiny jury room as twelve men debate the outcome of a trial they've just heard. The fate of a young defendant's life hangs in the balance after he's been accused of murdering his father.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Theatre In the Round Players
at Theatre in the Round
May 29-June 21
www.theatreintheround.org

If you're a fan of Sondheim—of which I am one of the biggest—you'll not want to miss *Putting It Together*. During a dinner party, guests transform the penthouse into a performing space to sing close to thirty songs by the musical theatre giant, who is argued to be the greatest composer and lyricist of all time.

DESTINY OF DESIRE

Guthrie Theater
at McGuire Proscenium Stage
May 30-July 11
www.guthrietheater.org

As two girls are born on the same evening in Bellarica, Mexico, they are swapped after one of the mothers discovers her biological daughter is born with a weak heart. The two girls meet over 18 years later and become quick friends, however the question is when will the truth come out in this telenovela-styled production.

HOLMES AND WATSON

Park Square Theatre
at Proscenium Stage
June 12-July 26
www.parksquaretheatre.org

This new adaptation of the adventures of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson takes a new twist as Sherlock Holmes potentially fakes his own death. Dr. Watson receives a note from a mental asylum stating that three different patients claim to be the infamous detective.

Elaine Alvarez, starring in Don Giovanni. Photo courtesy of Minnesota Opera

CABARET

Guthrie Theater
at Wurtele Thrust Stage
June 20–Aug. 23
www.guthrietheater.org

This sensational musical takes patrons through the seedy Kit Kat Club to forget the world outside, which includes the ever-growing threats of Nazi influence. As cabaret singer Sally Bowles meets an academic from Britain by the name of Cliff Bradshaw, they quickly fall in love despite Bradshaw's confusion on his own sexuality.

CAMBODIAN ROCK BAND

Theater Mu
at The Jungle Theater
June 24–Aug. 2
www.jungletheater.com

Fleeing Cambodia, Chum escaped a murderous regime in the beginning of the 1980s. As Chum returns thirty years later, he begins searching for his daughter but must face his past to secure any sort of future with her.

Sherwood. Photo by Woodford Sisters

JEEVES AT SEA

Theatre In the Round Players
at Theatre in the Round
July 3-26
www.theatreintheround.org

Stowing away on a yacht, Bertie Wooster disguises himself as a romance novelist as he returns for another adventure on the high sea. While they manage to remain unnoticed for long, his best friend Crumpet lets it slip that he may or may not have committed murder, as mayhem and mistaken identities run amok.

SUMMER: THE DONNA SUMMER MUSICAL

Hennepin Theatre Trust
at Orpheum Theatre
July 14-19
hennepintheatretrust.org

The Queen of Disco, Donna Summer, risked so much to break through from a gospel choir to the dance floor diva we all know and love. *Summer: The Donna Summer Musical* tells her iconic raise to fame through her incredible music.

GROUNDHOG DAY

Ordway
at Ordway Center for the Performing Arts
July 21-Aug. 9
ordway.org

Based on the film starring Bill Murray, *Groundhog Day* takes place on the same day, over and over again as Phil Connors gets stuck in a time loop. Connors must come to grips that he is doomed to repeat the same day that he loathed the first, second and third time after being forced to cover the groundhog ceremony in a small town in Pennsylvania.

SWEAT

Guthrie Theater
at McGuire Proscenium Stage
July 25-Aug. 29
www.guthrietheater.org

With rumors running about layoffs and closing, promotions being given and an ever-changing economy, old friendships begin to crack. As many blue-collar workers in a small town begin to panic, the life of middle-class takes center stage through the issues of race, immigration and politically charged moments in time.

COME FROM AWAY

Hennepin Theatre Trust
at Orpheum Theatre
Aug 11-23
www.hennepintheatretrust.org

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By Chris Tarbox

TORI FIXX *Remixed*

Tori Fixx has released eight solo hip-hop albums since 1998. Photo courtesy of Tori Fixx

A true artist always tries to finds a canvas that allows them to express themselves however they see fit, free of restraint or restriction. Tori Fixx found that canvas years ago, and to this day, he still finds new ways of creating new masterpieces with it.

"I never wanted to be pigeonholed or trapped," said Fixx. "Hip-hop is just what came first, and it was also the easiest for me to really get my feelings out."

Since 1996, the Indiana-born, Twin Cities-raised Tori Fixx has been making waves with his unique contributions to the world of hip-hop, both in terms of music and social impact. Fixx has been one of the earliest known pioneers of hip-hop in the GLBT community, releasing eight albums between 1998 and 2018, serving as a producer for a number of local artists, and currently heads his own label, Supa Qween Records. Currently residing in St. Paul, the talented multi-hyphenate's journey of self-discovery took him from the Midwest to the West Coast, but not before coming to terms with telling his family about his sexuality.

"I was about 18," said Fixx. "I knew…a couple of years prior that I was into guys. There also weren't very many resources for me to tap into, as far as figuring out my identity and who I was. So that was really pretty painful, and really scary. I was very isolated for a long time."

Fixx said that at the time, he was planning on graduating from high school and then coming out to his family before moving to Chicago. He wrote a letter to his family that he had tucked away, but upon preparing himself to move away, he saw that the letter wasn't where he left it.

"I saw it had been moved," said Fixx. "And my mother had found it. And she had written me a letter in response, basically saying that 'We love you no matter what.' And for the last four years that I was struggling, I was not only isolated, but I isolated myself away from family and a few friends…My family actually just wrapped their arms around me, which was great. But it still took a while after that for me to accept myself and find my way in the community."

So what drew Fixx towards hip-hop?

"Because I couldn't do rock and roll," said Fixx with a laugh. "I really I wish I could, but growing up in an urban area, hip-hop just came naturally. I was producing a lot of local talent at the time, and I was kind of behind the scenes. I didn't know much about journaling at the time, so I just kind of started writing my version of songs, and songs about guys and just my feelings and nobody was ever supposed to hear that ever."

For a year, Fixx lived in Hawaii, making mixtapes with friends. One such friend heard one of Fixx's tapes, and impressed by the music and Fixx's lyrical honesty, encouraged Fixx to share his music with the world.

"He's like, it could really probably help some people," recounted Fixx. "I didn't really think of it that way. So I decided to try my hand at the time, and at the time you had to put out CDs. There wasn't Spotify and iTunes; you went to a studio created and you had to go through with distribution and putting the CD out."

Despite his newfound calling, openly gay artists were scarce in the hip-hop scene in the late 1990s. Fixx said that initially, the experience of being a gay rapper was lonely and even terrifying. While in Hawaii, Fixx came upon a gay publication featuring a piece on Bay Area gay hip-hip

outfit Rainbow Flava. Fixx decided to move to San Francisco and meet up with the group, which became his first point of contact in the world of GLBT hip-hop.

"The beautiful part about it was slowly seeing people start to come out of the woodwork, because we united and started doing things around the Bay Area, and I was in the bay for about three years," said Fixx. "More people started to just appear. And there would be artists [that] would just kind of pop up and then email us, and before I knew it, it was starting to grow."

As the years went on, Fixx's profile began to grow, from his 1998 debut album *Impact* and his performance at the PeaceOUT World Homo Hop Festival in Oakland in 2003, to his appearance in the 2005 GLBT hip-hop documentary *Pick Up The Mic* and even DJing for Prince himself at Paisley Park. Eventually settling back in the Twin Cities, Fixx made a name for himself as a record producer.

"All I wanted to do was not only just keep creating, but I wanted to help anybody that was coming in here," said Fixx. "You need tracks? I'll make songs for you. I'll make beats; here, take them. A lot of people who really started this game, I produced them at some point time or another, just in the hopes of it flourishing and trying to keep it alive."

When asked if he had any specific influences in his music career, he said that he looked up to the artists who were unafraid of being themselves.

"You know, the Princes, the David Bowies," said Fixx. "Hip-hop happened to be my medium, but my influences came from the creative people: the Peter Gabriels and people who weren't afraid to experiment… Some of the guys like A Tribe Called Quest, I was a big fan of theirs, still am. A lot of the ladies, [like] Queen Latifah, because they had a huge fight, in just to see the obstacles they had to navigate. And they were talented. That impossibility that they turn into possibilities also gave me hope."

Fixx said that of the many queer hip-hop artists of today that he's been enjoying, he listed Dua Saleh, Booboo, Dizzy Fae, Blacc Phoenix, Kaoz, and R.A.D. (Rude Ass Dyke) as examples. Fixx said that the abundance of queer hip-hop artists was encouraging, seeing how it wasn't as easy for GLBT acts to break into the business years ago.

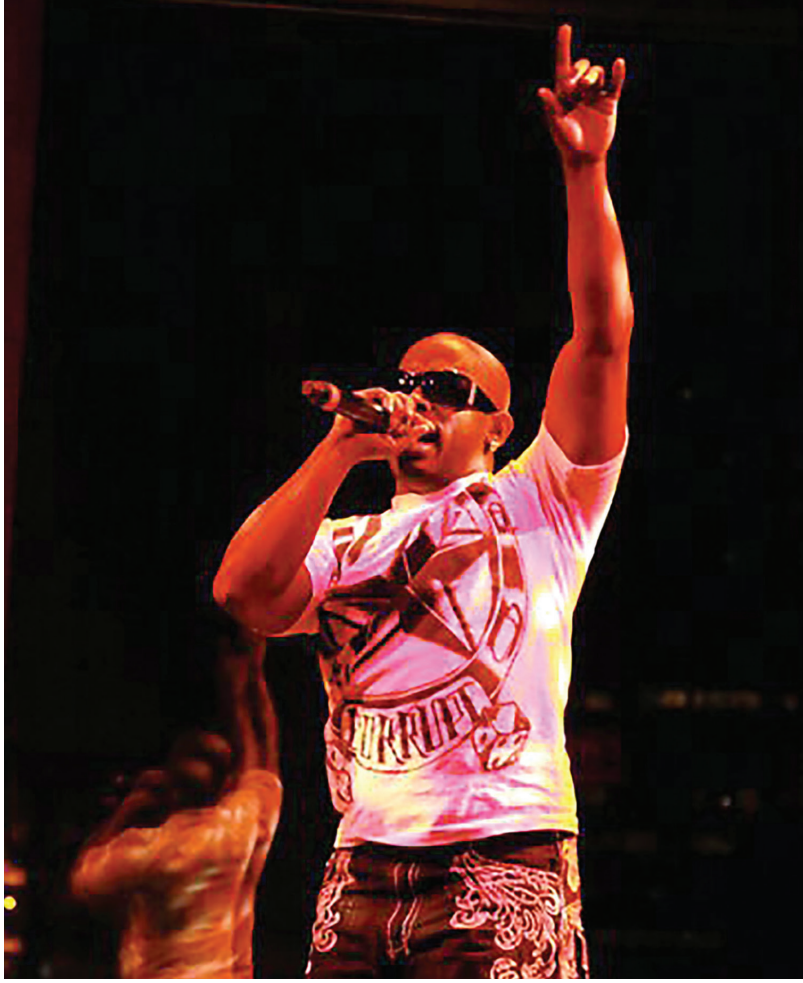
"It wasn't as much homophobia as at the time as it was disbelief, because nobody really put the two together, and it just didn't relate," said Fixx. "It's like: Gay hip-hop…what is this thing? It wasn't commercial enough to meet gay mainstream. And [the] straight hip-hop community just wasn't touching it at all. And occasionally, you'd see a few bursts that would pop up on MTV or something about a gay rapper. And it was never one of us. It was always some kind of shtick."

Fixx recalled one incident in particular that illustrated the obstacles gay artists faced in the medium, where he went on a date with a gay executive for a mainstream hip-hop label.

"He's like, 'You know, I'd never sign any one of you… I'd never sign an openly gay artist or act,'" said Fixx. "And it just crushed me, and not necessarily for me personally, but it was like, 'You're one of us and you're in there, and rather than try to make the way, you would just absolutely not.' He's like, 'No matter what, I just wouldn't do it.'"

"That hurt me more than any homophobic remark, because we know where you stand," Fixx continued. "But it's one of our own basically having the blockade up. If there's one of you, how many more people are there, not just with hip-hop, but with so many avenues of our community that we're blocking and hurting ourselves? That was a huge deal for me."

Nonetheless, Fixx says that the scene is flourishing today, what with openly queer artists such as Todrick Hall, Big Dipper, Lady Sovereign, Frank Ocean, and Deadlee serving as luminaries of the GLBT hip-hop scene. As for Fixx, the trailblazer himself? He's keeping busy with making new solo music, producing, and operating his new label.



Tori Fixx is a pioneer in the GLBT hip-hop industry, beginning his career in 1996.
Photos courtesy of Tori Fixx

"We're definitely putting out queer hip-hop stuff, and it's really kind of left-of-center," said Fixx. "If anything comes up and we can find a way to make it happen. I love to remix and I deejay at the clubs. The Saloon is my residency, so any time I can create something that I can play out, that's usually it."

Even almost 25 years later, an artist's work is never done.

You can hear Tori Fixx on Spotify and Bandcamp. Learn more about Supa Qween Records at www.supaqweenrec.com. ∎

A ROSSIPE FOR *Success*

By Brett Burger

Ross Mathews is going on another national tour, bringing the *Name Drop* book tour to the Varsity Theater in Minneapolis on Sunday, March 1.

Before we even began to talk about the book, I had to gush a little. I've interviewed celebrities, but it's been a while since I got to speak to someone who did make an impact in my life. Upon speaking with Ross Mathews, we joked about how cold it was in Minneapolis compared to the lovely Los Angeles weather he was experiencing. He promised to bring his coat and no matter how cold it was, he talked about his enthusiasm for the Twin Cities.

"I'm so excited to come. You know, Minneapolis-St. Paul is one of my favorite places in the entire world," he explained. "I come a ton for different things and every time I do, I have the best time, so I had to include it on my list of cities for touring."

Mathews is no stranger to writing. His first book, *Man Up!: Tales of my Delusional Self-Confidence,* was a best-seller and highlighted him growing up in a small farm town "as a young gay cartoon." His new book, *Name Drop: The Really Good Celebrity Stories I Usually Only Tell at Happy Hour*, is what happened after he moved to Hollywood and "matured into an older gay cartoon."

"I really felt like I'm the superfan of pop culture who just won a golden ticket and got to go past the velvet rope," Mathews said. "So I had an obligation to write a book like this. This book is the really good celebrity stories I usually only tell my friends at happy hour." So it's not just a clever title.

I received an advance copy of the book and adored how conversational it felt. It really did feel like Mathews was across the table from me with a drink in his hand. As I read the stories he wrote, I could hear his voice because of how natural and easy it was to read. It wasn't a normal stuffy, boring celebrity autobiography, which is why I asked him if that was always what he wanted for it.

"Listen, it is in my nature to be casual and conversational" he said. "You know, I really feel like we live in a world where it's them, the famous people, and us, the superfans. So this book is for us."

You know Mathews is honest in this, as the book is literally dedicated to "everyone who never got to sit at the cool kids' table in the cafeteria." He also writes that you can sit at his table any time, but on one condition—you share your tater tots.

Everything about this book and tour are different than you'd imagine. The stories also include cute cartoon drawings of him and the celebrity to which the following chapter is about. They also include cocktail and appetizer recipes, or as he likes to call them, Rossipes.

Each drink is also named after the celebrities. For example, the first chapter talks about how he met Lady Gaga before the Season 9 premiere of *RuPaul's Drag Race*. The start of the chapter has the Rossipe for a drink called A Star Fruit Martini is Born, which will absolutely be the first one I'll try.

With each celebrity releasing a book, they will often include a tour to go with it. While some strictly do press tours, others will do signings and events around the country. However, knowing Ross Mathews, you know it's not going to be a typical signing and picture at a Barnes and Noble.

Ross Mathews is bringing his Name Drop tour to the Varsity Theater on March 1.
Photo by Ricky Middlesworth

"This tour is the perfect complement to this book. I do an hour-and-a-half show, I'm doing stand up, we're playing Name Drop: The Game Show. I go into the audience where you can ask me anything and nothing is off limits." Mathews quickly spoke as he rejected the idea of a normal book tour. "The truth is, it's a really crappy world out there right now. People are in such a bad mood everywhere you turn because the news is so complicated. So I wanted to do a tour across the country where I can invite people in and we can shut the door and just laugh for an hour and a half."

The former intern and correspondent for *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* has come a long way over the last 18 years. He's done late night, red carpet events, *Chelsea Lately,* and now is on *RuPaul's Drag Race.* The Em-

my-Award winning show is currently about to air their twelfth season, so I had to ask him about it, to which he gushed about it and claimed he was obsessed with it.

However, as we know, *Drag Race* is so much more than just a reality competition show. It's a chance for queer people to see themselves on TV. Mathews got candid with this, as he talked about how some of these queens are so young that they don't know a time when queer people weren't on TV as much as they are now.

"They are inspired by all those seasons before and they also have been able to point at a television and say, 'Oh my gosh, look! Gay people, gay stories, gay people with heart, gay people who are complex, layered and interesting,'" he noted. "My generation didn't have that, and so now these kids are being able to skip past the part where they have to ask 'Am I good enough? What does a gay grown up look like?'"

Before we finished, I had one last question to ask, and that was if his publisher said he could only write one of these stories to tell everyone, which would it be? The answer surprised me as he declared it would be the time he met Barbra Walters on The View.

"It was a time when somebody who I idolized didn't live up to my expectations and I had to make peace with that," he explained. "I think I'm a better person after those experiences because I know I'm a better broadcaster and I see celebrities more human after those experiences."

Want to know what happened between him and Walters? You'll just have to read the book to find out! ∎

Ross Mathews Name Drop Book Tour
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Ross Mathews is coming to Minneapolis to promote his new book, Name Drop. Photo by Ricky Middlesworth

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ROLLER DERBY, *Save My Soul*

By Kassidy Tarala
Photos by Mike Hnida

The Minnesota Roller Derby, formerly known as Minnesota RollerGirls, offers a diverse, welcoming team for all skaters—and, yes, it will save your soul.

Originally founded in 2004 by the Donnelly sisters as the Minnesota RollerGirls, the increasingly popular roller derby team has since renamed itself Minnesota Roller Derby to be more inclusive.

"It really comes down to the fact that all people want to be respected and have a caring and welcoming community in which to thrive, so [rebranding] was a way for us to use our very brand to reinforce our core values of diversity and inclusivity," says Val Kyrie, or VK for short, who is a jammer, pivot, and blocker for the Dagger Dolls home team. "We want all of those that skate with us to feel that they belong here under our common banner."

The Minnesota Roller Derby league embraces and encourages members of the GLBT community to participate in the sport. VK says they have many skaters of various sexualities and gender identities, including herself.

"As a gay woman, I personally feel that this is not only a safe space but a space in which we can affect change that spreads out into the greater world," VK says. "We are a very protective community and have each other's backs no matter how any of us identify, and we embrace our volunteers and fans in the same way."

For VK, roller derby isn't just a sport, it's a way of life. She says it has given her an outlet for anger and other negative emotions while also providing a safe and welcoming community to call home.

"Roller derby is life. It has given me a community, provided me the opportunity to make amazing friends. It has given me an outlet to pour myself into during those tragic times in life when all you can feel is anger, it gave me the tools to save myself from depression," she says. "Playing roller derby is the first time in my life I have ever felt like an athlete, and that is a strange and amazing feeling. Most of all, roller derby helped me discover who I am."

Jammer, pivot, and blocker Gay of Reckoning agrees that the Minnesota Roller Derby has made a huge impact on their life, especially during the transition of moving from Madison, Wisconsin to Minneapolis in 2015.

"I first tried out roller derby when I was in college and my friend suggested that we try to join our local team, telling me that it was a badass, feminist, alternative culture," Gay says. "When I got there, I learned that they were absolutely right, but that they had failed to mention that it was a sport and actually really difficult, so I ended up not having the time to pursue it seriously until I was out of college and living with friends in Madison."

After moving to Minneapolis, they say it took them many years of training to begin to play the game, and many more to have any success with it.

Minnesota Roller Derby, formerly known as the Minnesota RollerGirls, has been operating since 2004.

Minnesota Roller Derby's home team championship on will take place on March 7.

"Minnesota Roller Derby is my favorite team in the world because we are fiercely competitive while remaining kind and welcoming," they say. "Our team is ranked in the top 40 of over 400 international teams."

Gay is coaching this season while recovering from ACL reconstruction, and they say it inspires them to come to practice and be met with thirty skaters ready to push themselves and learn and grow, no matter how difficult it is. Gay says they joined roller derby before they were openly non-binary, and the community accepted them for who they are, rather than who they appear to be.

For Velvet Wench, jammer for Atomic Bombshells, skating has always come naturally. "I actually grew up skating at my hometown local rink but never imagined that it could be something more than a casual Saturday night socializing event," she says. "My parents met roller skating, so having wheels on my feet feels very natural to me."

Playing for Minnesota Roller Derby, though, isn't your average lap around the rink, though. Velvet says the league is a family where everyone lifts each other up at practice and at home.

"For example, some of us wear our pronouns proudly on our uniform, and some of us hold our teammates' hands when they come out to their family and friends," she says. "For those interested in roller derby, I would tell you first there are many ways and combinations to be a part of this sport and league. First, you can come to events, show up, and meet the awesome people around you who also enjoy the sport."

Velvet says they also welcome volunteers to help events run smoothly and sell merchandise, have a recreational league that meets Sundays during the fall and spring sessions, and has a team of officials both on and off skates who "are arguably more important than us skaters because they keep us from descending into chaos."

"Sometimes people say roller derby saves your soul. And it's super cliché, but it's 100 percent true," Velvet adds.

Upcoming competitions include a home team championship on March 7, where two of the four home teams will compete for the Golden Skate, and the All-Star (travel team) season kickoff at home in the Roy Wilkins Auditorium against the Madison Dairyland Dolls on April 25.

For more information, visit mnrollerderby.com. ∎

OUR RIDES | BY RANDY STERN | PHOTOS BY RANDY STERN

Getting Your Volvo Fixed at Swedish Motors

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The service and pre-owned sales shop were founded by Justin Christenson in 2008. Christenson explained, "I had worked prior to that at a dealership and realized I wanted to provide a different type of customer experience that focused more so on the customers themselves."

The philosophy of the shop comes from Christenson's Swedish background, where he would describe himself as "a perfectionist." "It's where our company's slogan came from," Christenson explains, "'Do it right or not at all.'" Over the past twelve years, Swedish Motors has grown from a small shop space to triple the size, since turning the original space into its pre-owned showroom, waiting area, office, and reception area.

Plus, you are also greeted by Christenson's two lovely dogs, Bailey and Willow. You might say they are his receptionists.

Swedish Motors specializes in Volvos—practically every one of them produced in any era. Christenson explains that "we see quite a spread of model years. We work on some as old as [19]78, [19]79 and then we've had quite a few 2016s in here as well. [20]16s, a few [20]17s. We'll see all wheel drives, front wheel drives, back in the late [19]90s, early 2000s [when] they had the five cylinder [engine]. Now we're transitioning out of the six cylinders and starting to see more of the four cylinders as well."

When we were there, we saw a lot of P2 platform Volvos, a very common type of model that is still around in the Twin Cities. That platform has built some very popular models, such as the first-generation XC90. That particular Volvo had a variety of engines, including the rare V8

developed by Yamaha. Also seen as the smaller S40, V50, and C30 models, which are still common are here, as well. Mostly, Christenson has worked on the "white block" engine family, developed for Volvo's front-drive platforms. However, the shop is now seeing some of the newer Drive-E four-cylinder engine family on later Volvos.

As far as business is concerned, Christenson sees a high repeat customer rate—in the 90 percentile. While business has been good, there's always room for more customers to come to Swedish Motors. "We've been pushing more so on our marketing campaigns," said Christenson. "So we have been getting new customers but that's the fun part about it. I'm able to get to know the customers on a first name basis and really see how they're doing." As for advertising with Lavender, Christenson reports that customers have mentioned their ad in the magazine when they come for service

Most of the work performed at Swedish Motors has been maintenance on Volvo's cars. "We highly recommend that you [have] preventative maintenance and oil changes," said Christenson, "[and] stay on top of that. We give a quick, routine safety inspection with every oil change. Tires, brakes, suspension, anything that we see that's out of place, we can bring it to your attention."

Swedish Motors also sells pre-owned cars. During our visit, they had two lovely Volvos on display: a white 2011 S40 T5 and a white 2009 S60 AWD. Both are definitely worth the look, and available at some pretty good prices.

As a vehicle reseller, we asked Christenson for some advice on what you should do when looking at a used Volvo. "I'd highly recommend that pre-purchase inspection," Christenson explains, "That gives you a good idea of what's been done and what needs to be done coming in the future, as well as maintenance history."

For our Volvo lovers who read our magazine, check out Swedish Motors in Hopkins. They're open Monday through Friday during regular business hours. Saturday service would require an appointment. You can check out their service and their pre-owned inventory at swedishmotorsmn.com. ▮

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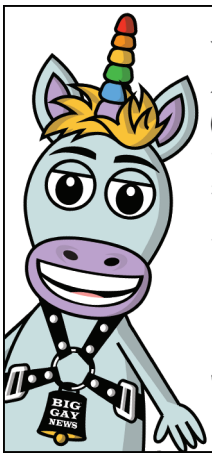

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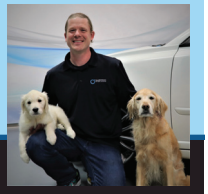

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OUR ROAD TRIPS | BY RANDY STERN | PHOTOS BY RANDY STERN

Driving Through Maryland's History

We know what you're thinking…what happened to the Our Rides column last year? Where's the car reviews? *Where's the stories about scooters and public transportation? What's up with these road trip stories? Don't you have a travel column? We love reading Carla Waldemar's experiences around the world!*

If you love the past eight years of this column, we sincerely thank you!

Let me explain why this column has become a "road trip column." While it is great that we can present to potential GLBT consumers the latest and greatest in automobiles, there has to be a point to demonstrate what you can do after you purchased your vehicle.

In truth, we know for a fact that GLBT people love to travel. Your social media is full of check-ins at the airport, photos from the cruise ship, the hotel, or some prominent point of interest at your destination. You fly, sail, take the train, the bus…and drive to wherever you want to go.

So, we put two-and-two together…and, voila! I'm now your on-the-road tour guide.

Just like you, I love to travel. I love getting on the road and going somewhere. I love exploring new places and meeting new people, to see what has changed over time. I also love going back to old familiar places and seeing what's new while reconnecting with the places I once hung out and the people that I knew back there.

Last year was our test. I ventured to a few places for this magazine and discovered the old and new. I also met people in our community that mattered in places where they truly matter. Fargo, Mankato, and Cedar Rapids were just the beginning. The adventure continues into 2020 with new and familiar destinations and experiences.

Before I dive into 2020, there was one road trip from last year I forgot to write about on here…

Last April, I was out in Washington, D.C. attending a media event at the Auto Show there. After all the hubbub at the Washington Convention Center, it was time for me to spend the rest of my time in and around our Nation's Capitol.

Back in 1996, I moved to the D.C. Area from California. I won't get into my reasoning, except to say that I ran my course in my home state. It was also the motivation to find something meaningful in my life. We've all been there, right.

My four years in the District—eventually moving to Falls Church, Virginia where I spent

working on a Defense contract as a procurement specialist for the agency's information technology infrastructure. After some adjustment to the climate—physically and politically—I started to really like the area. It was also a hub for many trips by car, train, and air up and down the East Coast and out to parts of the Midwest.

I left the D.C. Area in 2000. I only returned once since then. My return last April was in part a business trip. The other part was to begin the day after my day at the Washington Auto Show.

After a couple of nights enjoying the hospitality of my colleague William Hopper and his husband David at their home in the Chevy Chase neighborhood of Washington, I headed northbound on Interstate 270 towards Frederick, Maryland. My plan was to head to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania to visit the battlefield and the town itself. If you know your U.S. history, Gettysburg became the turning point of the Civil War.

I was enjoying my time behind the wheel of a 2019 Honda Pilot Touring Elite, supplied by American Honda, as I drove through Frederick's historic downtown area. Driving along, you were propelled back to the days before the Revolutionary War, with most of the downtown buildings still stand from the 18th Century, housing shops and apartments that are simply modern.

My motivation to get to Gettysburg was thwarted due to heavy Friday noontime traffic on northbound U.S. Highway 15. It was there when I made a decision to head towards another key Civil War battlefield: Antietam.

Antietam is also known by another name: Sharpsburg. The small Maryland town located just a few miles from the Potomac River was the site where over 22,000 soldiers died on its soil. Gen. Robert E. Lee's Confederate forces met Maj. Gen. Robert McClellan's Union army in all-out warfare. In the end, McClellan repelled Lee back across to Virginia, but not without suffering severe losses on both sides.

The battlefield served as a reminder of what the Civil War felt like some 150-plus years later.

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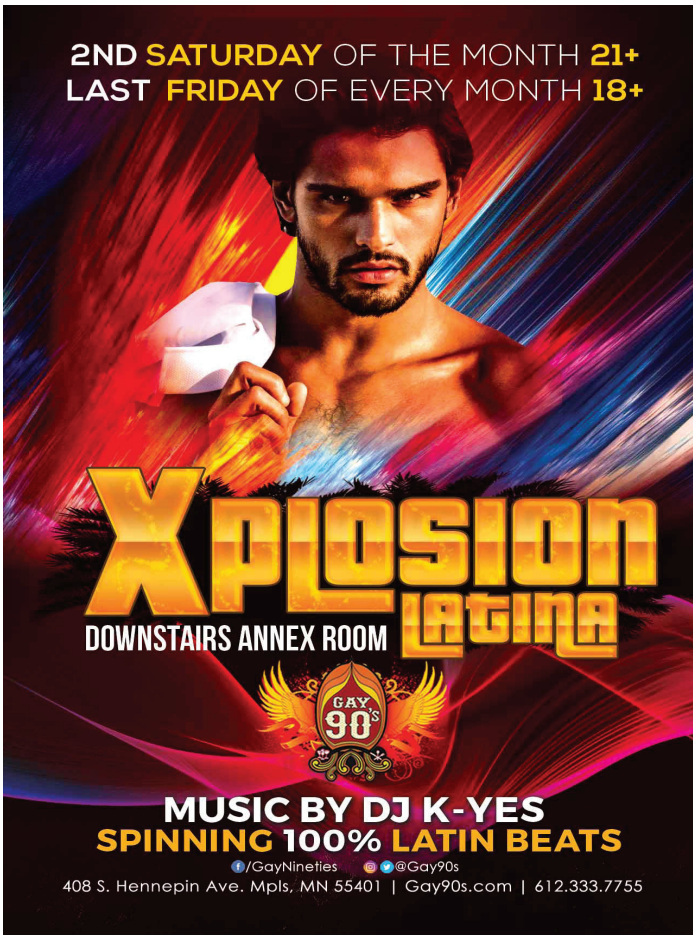

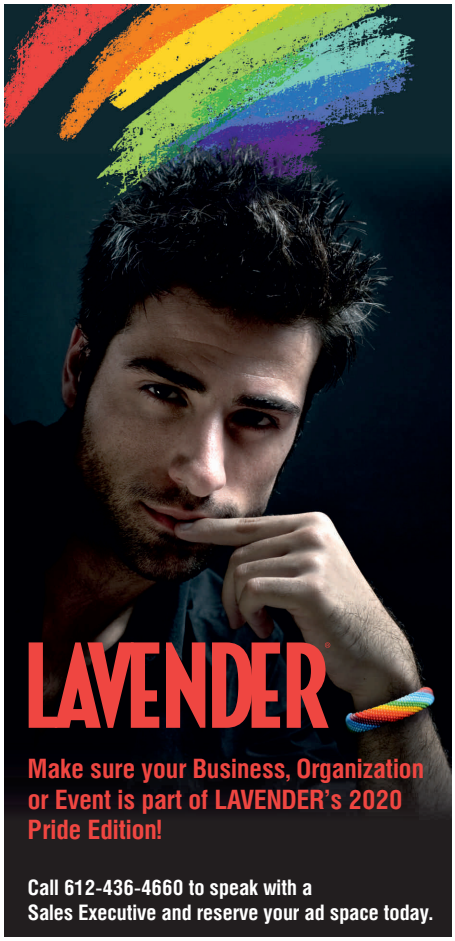

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Antietam was not the battle to end the conflict, but one of who had the most resilient army to hold their ground over the cause of humanity. The rolling topography of West Central Maryland can tell many stories of regiments wiped out thanks to an argument over slavery and the definition of a United States.

From there, I crossed into West Virginia. This is actually one of the best parts of the state—that tea spout that meets Maryland and Virginia on the eastern end. Shepherdstown is the most welcoming community you will find in West Virginia with GLBT-friendly spaces and a cool vibe within its 18th and 19th Century structures. From there, the countryside yielded the spot where the Shenandoah River splits from the Potomac: Harper's Ferry. If time was on my side, I would have stopped into the historic area where I once visited some 20 years ago. I also passed up the spot where John Brown planned his raid on the nearby armory for a slave revolt that almost happened.

If you travel out that way, please do yourselves a favor and follow history. Visit Harper's Ferry, the John Brown Raid site, the Antietam Battlefield, and so forth. This part of this country gives you the perspective of the first 100 years of history since the start of the Revolutionary War.

After my drive through Maryland and West Virginia, I checked into my hotel in Gaithersburg for my final night in the D.C. Area. Sometime later, I headed out to dinner meeting with a couple of friends I have not seen since their departure from the Twin Cities several years ago.

My dear friends Erich, Steve and I met a superb restaurant in Gaithersburg's Downtown Crown district called Ted's Bulletin (220 Ellington Blvd.). The dinner reunion was a wonderful moment on this trip. And, the food was superb.

The next morning, I returned to Ted's Bulletin in Gaithersburg for my final meal in the D.C. Area. It was again very delicious, and the service was excellent. It was sad to leave an area I once called home, but Baltimore was calling. I had to answer.

After some meandering across the heart of the state, I made it into Baltimore's Inner Harbor. My first stop was Oriole Park at Camden Yards—the home of the Baltimore Orioles. The ballpark opened in 1992 as the first wave of neo-retro ballparks bridging baseball's part with its present and future. The ballpark beautifully incorporates an old warehouse past right field, turning it into offices, retail, and dining. There is a pedestrian mall, called Eutaw Street, that divides the old warehouse with the ballpark itself. Having been at a game there, the place still gives off a wonderful vibe that welcomes many to this old port city. It still looks great today.

Some post-lunch meandering took me into the heart of Fells Point, one of the first neighborhoods to be gentrified in the city of Baltimore. Broadway Market was under construction, but that did not deter anyone from enjoying the neighborhood's hip and cool vibe.

After checking into my final hotel out by Thurgood Marshall Baltimore Washington International Airport, I went back into the city for a late dinner call. With time to kill, I wound up in the Federal Hill neighborhood south of Inner Harbor. While this is an example of classic Baltimore with its rowhouses and narrow streets, it has also transformed into another hip and cool neighborhood for younger residents. I noticed a few rainbow flags flying in the neighborhood, which is always a good sign of life for us.

Eventually, I drove the Honda Pilot back into the Fells Point neighborhood for an exercise in parallel parking. Street parking is a premium in most of Baltimore, but I found a spot in the neighborhood that barely fit this mid-size three-row SUV. Once parked, I walked a few blocks to meet Brian, his husband Mike, and two other couples for dinner in a tavern Ale Mary's (1939 Fleet St., Baltimore). The place combines great steaks, seafood, and tater tots. The latter turned out to be their signature set of dishes and proven quite popular with our table.

Baltimore does have a vibrant GLBT life, anchored in the Mount Vernon neighborhood north of the Inner Harbor. Or, you can follow the trail of Baltimore's most famous GLBT cultural icon, John Waters, to his favorite haunt at Atomic Books (3620 Falls Rd., Baltimore), which is further north away from the Mount Vernon neighborhood.

Perhaps my final tip on travel out East is to incorporate some driving into your trip. Get out beyond the city and find something special, even historic. And, yes, culture.

That takes care of last year. Now, it's 2020. It's all clear for the next road trip ahead! ∎

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